

3/30/2022

Testimony by Maegan Adams supporting SB487 An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler Early Care and Family Support Initiative

Senator Fonfara, Representative Scanlan, member of the Finance Committee, my name is Maegan Adams, and I am the Executive Director of Bristol Child Development Center, we are a NAEYC accredited, state subsidized program that currently offers care to over 200 families, we are the only subsidized infant and toddler program in Bristol. Additionally, I am the Co-President of the Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB487. This bill would redirect existing tax revenue from the budget reserve to a new non lapsing Early Care and Family Support account. Funds in this account would then be used to contract with childcare providers both centers and family childcare homes to increase the supply of high-quality infant toddler care. Priority will be given to childcare providers in lower income childcare deserts. Which would include my program.

As mentioned, we are the only subsidized infant and toddler program in Bristol, we have a year-long wait list of families that are looking for care. It is incredibly challenging to open additional infant and toddler classrooms without subsidized funding. The reason being is that the ratio for infants and toddlers are 1 staff to 4 children which makes the cost to run the classroom extremely high. As it is, the subsidies I receive for the current infant and toddler slots are not enough to sustain that age group, so I am frequently relying on other sources of income or grants to make up the difference and keep my infant and toddler classrooms open.

We receive approximately \$191.27 per infant and toddler child per week, which is \$9,946.04 per year. Parents pay via a sliding scale based upon their income and household size, and to be eligible for this program, parents must fall below 75% SMI. The average parent fee for an infant/toddler slot is around \$60 per week, which for some is still remarkably high and unaffordable, that would be a family of 4 earning about \$30,000 per year. Without this subsidized funding, parents could see a cost for infant and toddler care upwards of \$350 to \$400 per week or around \$20,000 per year which is essentially the cost of a college tuition. To run a high-quality infant and toddler classroom and to pay our highly qualified and degreed teachers livable wages it would cost us about 30% more than what we receive now.

A major goal in our program is to expand services for families by converting existing classrooms to open two more infants and toddler rooms, this would help with our wait list, and it would get families into programs they need for their children. However, one major concern we have is the cost to renovate and open this classroom without additional subsidies. Being able to access this additional funding would allow for us to increase our programming and support our community.

Passing this bill would mean all the difference to programs across the state, and low-income families. Programs would be able to expand needed services while accessing resources to ensure high-quality programming, and families would be able to not only find care, but also be able to receive additional needed supports.

I urge you to please pass this bill for our families and childcare programs and thank you for your time.

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